

## 2014 SFC Gakkai Research Grant Report for Juanita Heigham

Title: Obstacles and inducements for international students acclimatizing to university life

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to investigate impediments students face in actively participating in the local educational community in which they study and live. At SFC, it is common to find international students living somewhat isolated lives. This undermines the potential for a culturally rich campus where global innovation and creativity can thrive. In this pilot study, I investigated what impedes international students from assimilating into wider social and academic spheres on campus and what might encourage greater connection among students. I conducted extensive interviews with first and second year international GIGA students. The data I collected reveals that although individual students' obstacles vary somewhat, there appears to be several overarching challenges for them: few opportunities to meet Japanese students, Japanese students' reluctance to talk with them and feelings of powerlessness as a result of communication problems due to most staff and some faculty having limited English ability. These findings have been enlightening, and I am now working on using them to enhance English in Action and help students build an international student association at SFC. For more information on English in Action at SFC see the following.

<http://english-in-action.weebly.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EnglishInActionAtSFC/>

In addition to this, I interviewed Dr. Naoko Aoki of the Graduate School of Letters at Osaka University who is active in their Super Global University work. Through this, I was able to get a glimpse of how a national university is approaching its Super Global responsibilities. This discussion has lead Dr. Aoki and me to believe more open communication and sharing of ideas is necessary to promote the best practice among Super Global universities.

The results of the student interviews will be published in a forthcoming article.

Heigham, J. (2015). Voices on Campus: International Students in an English-medium Instruction Degree Program in Japan. *Journal of the Ochanomizu University English Society* 5, 63-73.

Results from the study including interviews with students and Dr. Aoki will be presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics 2015 Conference: Language Assessment for Multilingualism: Promoting Linguistic Diversity and Intercultural Communication in May.

After completing this project, I see my future research including a continuing investigation of international student experiences and ways to promote their participation in campus life at SFC, and devising ways to establish communication between Super Global Universities.